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Pouvwa pou Pèp La:

Non-Governmental Organizations

and Community Engagement in Haiti

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by

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Masters of Science in Community and Regional Planning

The University of Texas at Austin
May 2019

Dedication

Pou Ayiti. L'Union Fait La Force.

Abstract

Pouvwa pou Pèp La:

Non-governmental Organizations and Community Engagement in Haiti

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For decades, numerous NGOs, foreign and local, have implemented hundreds of projects in Haiti. I have interviewed a variety of NGOs working in Haiti to learn more about the methods used to connect communities and local government with projects in order to foster governance and organizing capacities. From local to foreign, small to large, every NGO documented here experienced different opportunities and barriers when working with community members and local governments on the implementation of projects. The following Professional Report identifies important and successful community engagement practices pursued by NGOs, but also reveals the lack of capacity building methods used in the projects described here. Based on previous academic research in the field of disaster relief and the interviews conducted, I conclude by providing recommendations for better engaging communities in an effort to build capacity within local Haitian communities and within the Haitian government.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck the small nation of Haiti. Devastating the country, the earthquake caused an estimated 30,000 deaths, displaced over a million people, and leveled many structures near the epicenter. Centered near the city of Leogane--only 10 miles from the capital--the earthquake ravaged the densest parts of the country, destroying private homes and most of the key government offices, including the National Palace. The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) named the earthquake the most destructive event the country had ever experienced in recent times due to the sheer number of deaths and destruction. Although a 7.0 on the Richter scale is high, there have been stronger earthquakes in the past that did not create as much mayhem as the 2010 earthquake created. For example, in 1960, Chile had a 9.5 magnitude earthquake that directly killed 4,485 people; and in 2004, an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.1 was felt across 14 different Asian countries, directly killing 230,000 people. The impacts of other natural disasters are not listed to compare tragedy with tragedy, but to shed light on how terribly unprepared Haiti is in the face of natural disasters.

Unfortunately, in addition to earthquakes, the western side of Hispaniola is no stranger to natural disasters of other kinds. During the 2008 hurricane season, the nation was hit by four hurricanes: Fay, Gustav, Hannah, and Ike. In 2002, 2003, 2006, and 2007, Haiti's agricultural land was destroyed by constant flooding. And after the 2010 earthquake, Haiti continued to endure more hurricanes. However, while Haiti cannot

avoid natural disasters due to its location in hurricane and earthquake zones, its ability to recover after natural disasters has not improved in the past decades. This coupling of Haiti as a regular target of hurricanes with its status as one of the poorest and less-developed nations in the world has made the country a focus of the efforts of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Even before the 2010 earthquake, the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) conservatively estimated that over 10,000 NGOs were working in Haiti.

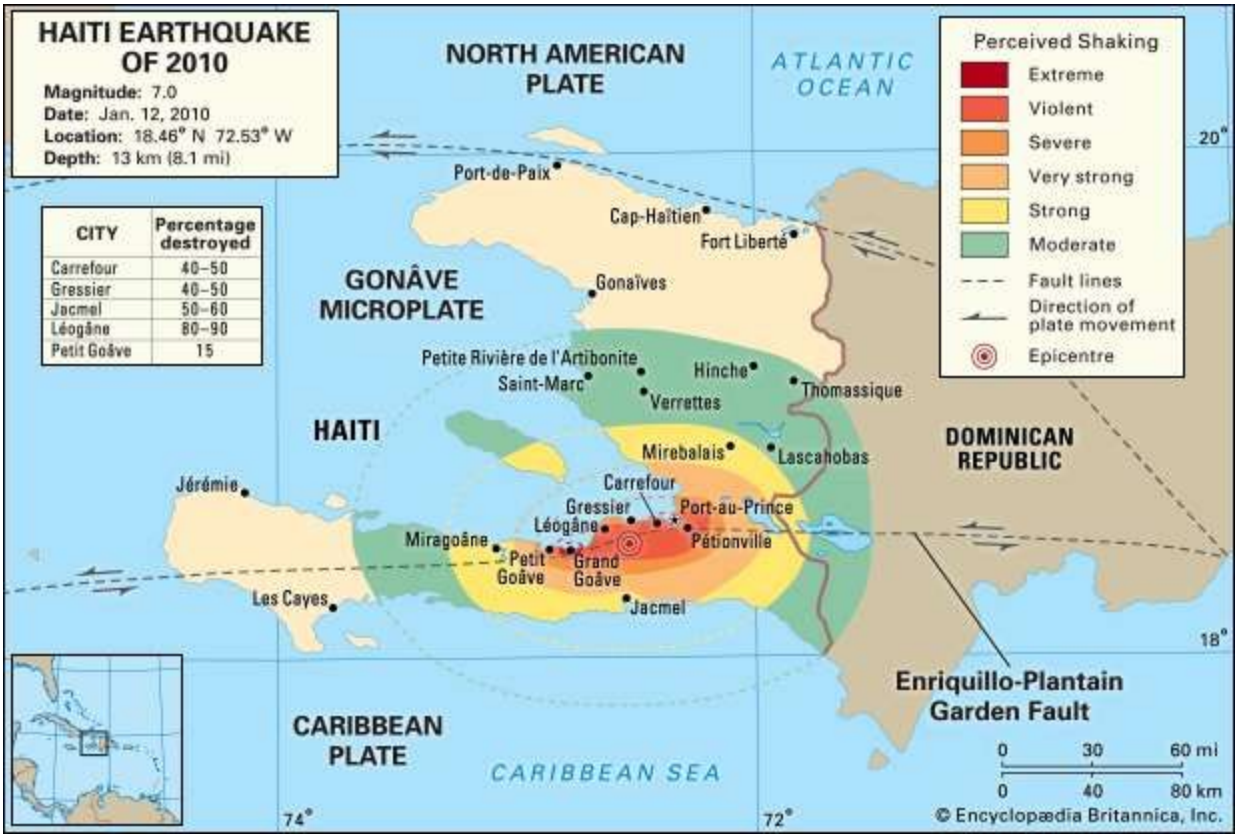

Figure 1: Haiti earthquake of 2010 Source: Britannica

NGO interest in Haiti began in the 1970s but took off in earnest in the 1990s during the presidential administration of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. It is not a coincidence that this great influx of NGOs to the country began during the second United States occupation of Haiti in 1994. During the years since U.S. troops left Haitian soil, NGOs have assumed much of the regular governance functions in the country and contributed to a continued weakening of the Haitian government. In an effort to curb “corruption”, the Haitian government has largely been excluded from directly receiving aid funding. After the earthquake, in an act of global kindness, over $13 billion dollars from private citizens and nations was pledged to help Haiti rebuild, but the Haitian government received less than one cent of every dollar pledged to assist the country. According to the Associated Press, after the 2010 earthquake, disaster assistance NGOs received 43 cents per dollar while the U.S. military received 33 cents of every dollar donated by the United States (2010) .While the proliferation of NGOs would appear to be a boon for Haiti, and it has indeed helped many in need, the influx of NGOs has also served to reproduce colonial relations of inequality and foreign occupation and failed to strengthen local governance capacity. As much as 70% of NGO funding comes from national funding agencies in the Global North while only 30% comes from private donors. It is an unwelcome truth for the first sovereign black republic that over 70% of the nation's services are provided by NGOs, and 70% of NGO funding comes from Northern states such as the United States, Canada, and France.

After the 2010 earthquake, many foreign NGOs worked together to tackle different crisis. The United Nations Logistical Base or 'Log Base" served as a meeting ground for foreign aid providers. The Log Base was a city within a city created for the comfort of foreign agencies. With flower-lined walkways, international cuisine at the ready, and the American dollar as its currency, Log Base served as the coordination site for over 70 agencies at its peak. The paradox presented by this site within a poor and ravaged city led me to begin researching the roles that foreign aid agencies play in Haiti. My preliminary research showed me that in order for international NGOs to create impactful and sustainable projects, agencies must reassess and reconfigure their current methods of relationship building with Haitian communities, government agencies and organizations. This initial research led me to my overarching research question: How do NGOs build relationships with communities and other stakeholders to curate local investment, empower community members, and develop impactful and sustainable projects? In this context, the concept of sustainability refers to the projects' ability to continue without the support of the original funding NGO. This overarching research question is answered through the investigation of three primary questions:

1. What methods -past and present- have NGOs utilized when working in communities?
2. What roles do local residents, government officials, and aid agencies play to support each other's goals?

3. Who decides if a project is 'well done'?

Although the majority of my interviews were conducted remotely via Skype, I spent five weeks in two of Haiti's most populous cities, Jacmel and Petion Ville, during the winter of 2017. During my stay, I had the opportunity to hear different perspectives from locals, businessmen, and NGO staff members about the work NGOs are doing in Haiti. Instead of focusing on one specific sector, such as infrastructure, education or economic development, I chose to interview representatives from a range of organizations of different size in order to document the great variety of interests and goals that exist in the non-profit community in Haiti. The NGOs I investigated ranged from small grassroots groups such as Anseye Pou Ayiti, to larger organizations with international connections such as World Neighbors, to large agencies backed by powerful governments. The agencies I interviewed and their areas of focus are as follows:

- Founded in 2009, Anseye Pou Ayiti (APA) is a *movement* supported by a staff of about a twelve. This local Haitian-led NGO currently works within underserved rural communities to raise the level of education available to children. Unlike many other NGOs, APA does not build schools, instead they partner with local communities to train exceptional teachers through a two-year fellowship to work within the local school system.

- The internationally known, United Nations (UN) Habitat was established in 1975 to "deal with the rapid and often uncontrolled growth of cities" (UN Habitat, 2012). Since 2008, UN Habitat has collaborated on over a dozen projects within Haiti with other high profile partners such as the US Army, multiple ministries, and many other UN offices on the island, including the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations Institute of Training and Research (UNITR). UN Habitat was by far the largest agency that I spoke with. Between 2008 and 2015, UN Habitat invested over $23 million dollars on 12 projects throughout the country, mostly to support recovery after the 2010 earthquake.
- Originally founded in 1955 as Medicine for Missions, the Seattle based NGO World Concern has worked in Haiti for over 30 years. The organization supports communities by providing educational services, microcredit loans, programs to foster food security, and disaster risk reduction. According to their website, World Concern has a staff of 613 people throughout 15 countries.
- With a small Haitian-led team of about five, World Neighbors is the smallest NGO I spoke with. The small team works to create saving and credit groups, provide fishing training, and disaster preparedness training (World Neighbors, 2017). Although it is based in Oklahoma City, World Neighbors predominantly staffs field teams with local residents from the areas they are serving.

Before entering this discussion, my only interaction with NGOs was through academic textbooks and news reports. In an NPR news report published in 2015, the Red Cross was unable to detail how it spent the $500 million USD the organization had raised for the 2010 Haitian earthquake relief. The Red Cross had also overestimated the number of people who had received assistance and overstated the impact of their projects. In reality, a full one-third of the funds had gone to administrative cost and fees paid to both the Red Cross and foreign agencies that had been recruited to do the relief work. After hearing about this funding mismanagement, I wanted to learn more about the motivations and structural forces driving the work of NGOs. Throughout my time researching and interviewing NGO representatives about their perspectives and strategies regarding community engagement, community partnering and community ownership, I found myself increasingly focused on the issue of capacity building. After learning more about the projects that had been introduced into the communities and the relationships that had been formed (or perhaps dismissed) in the process, I understood that although organizations prioritized capacity building in the communities they served, their success was mixed. Furthermore, very few organizations were concerned about building the capacity of the local government.

In my meetings with agencies, I was interested in learning more about their methods for working with communities and their personal perspective on their work.

While I was armed with a host of questions, I enjoyed letting the speakers decide what direction they wanted the conversation to go. Some spoke freely with little prompting from me, while others were more guarded and less forthcoming about their agencies' practice. Every interview began with the same request, "tell me about how you found yourself in this role and what your organization does". The questions that followed were:

- How do you select the communities you work with?
- How do you enter communities?
- What role do community members play in the implementation of your projects?
- Where/when is the government involved in the project?
- When/how do you leave these communities?

I ended every interview with the same question, "do you have any advice for other agencies working in Haiti?" This question was by far my favorite since it allowed the agencies to imagine future improvements without seeming malicious or confrontational.

The greatest barrier to my research was a lack of time. With only five weeks at my disposal, it was incredibly difficult to arrange site visits to speak with staff members. While there is mass transit throughout the capital in the form of 'tap taps'-eccentrically decorated privately owned automobiles that operate together to form a mass transit network--many agencies worked in rural parts of the country only accessible by an hour-long ride in a personal vehicle. My research and the academic community would have benefited from more time to conduct a thorough ethnographic study of the role of

NGOs in Haiti. Also, while I was given the opportunity to speak with a variety of NGO staff members, it was impossible to approach all NGOs working in the country, nor was it possible to delve into the perspectives of government officials and local community members. I hope that the future researchers will conduct more in-depth research on the role of NGOs in shaping the future of Haiti.

The first chapter of my PR examines the current literature on NGOs in Latin America and the Caribbean to describe more broadly the history and influence of NGOs on governance in the region. Chapter Two examines foreign intervention in Haiti, which provides a broader understanding of the role and rationales of NGOs working in the country today. The chapter review the major political moments in Haiti, allowing the reader to gain a better understanding of some of the principal events that have contributed to shaping the nation as it is today. In Chapter Three, I present my findings, focusing primarily on the community engagement methods employed by the different agencies investigated. Finally, in Chapter Four I discuss the past and present of NGOs within Haiti and introduce recommendations for the future. In this chapter, I highlight some of the best methods that foreign aid agencies, local nonprofits, the government, and community members of the community have developed in the field. Finally, in the Conclusion, I sum up my work by recommending some action items that may lead to the more sustainable and long-term projects in Haiti.

CHAPTER 1:

DONORS VS. BENEFICIARIES:

REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT LITERATURE

When critically looking at the work of NGOs globally—in particular foreign or international NGOs (INGOs)—we have to consider the logic of their decision making. In the past decades the NGO sector has morphed from a charitable institution into a "professionalized aid sector," creating a disconnection between those who fund, those who serve, and those in need (Pearce, 2010). With large aid agencies such as the Red Cross, Oxfam International, and the United Nations funding hundreds of projects across the world totaling billions of dollar, they find it increasingly important to satisfy the interests of their donors, perhaps at the expense of those they seek to serve. Some critics have commented that the shift from working to make a change to working to please donors has created an aid sector that views charity and goodwill as a "commodity" (Edmonds, 2012).

One major issue that has arisen from aid agencies' prioritizing donor happiness over supporting beneficiaries is the increasing competition between agencies throughout the sector. Globally, NGOs have shifted their focus from creating change to staying alive in an industry that gets more congested year after year. In order to stand out from other agencies and secure funding, agencies increasingly find it necessary to create projects that catch the eyes of donors, to work in isolation, and to "mark their territories" with

welcome signs (Panda, 2007; Schuller, 2009; Edmonds, 2012). In the context of Haiti, this type of competition among aid agencies has left the country as a "vast cemetery of projects" (Schoneberg, 2016). When aid organizations are constantly working to secure funding, projects are increasingly shaped to serve the whims of donors, whether this is providing clean drinking water, developing early childhood literacy programs, or implementing micro loan programs. Though all of the previously mentioned projects are all morally good and in many places helpful to residents in need, when conducted under the pressure of donors these projects are sometimes ill-advised and inappropriate. Donors are often short-sighted and ill-informed about the purpose and context of projects, and by catering to the wants of donors, agencies begin to shift their perspective away from the needs of their beneficiaries. Ultimately, they effectively become accountable to their donors, not to their beneficiaries (Edmond 2012).

This type of accountability has been referred to as "upward accountability": instead of being solely accountable to the communities they serve, agencies feel more accountability to those funding their initiatives (Chynoweth, S. K., Zwi, A. B., & Whelan, A. K., 2018). This type of accountability is revealed through the traditional marketing materials produced by NGOs, for example through websites that show the happy communities served or reports with a focus on the number of people "helped". In worst-case situations, community members and governments are more affected by decisions of omnipresent donors than aid staff on the ground. Ultimately, this situation

has created tension between the aid industry and those it serves, leading scholars to call for a restructuring of the relationship between donors and aid agencies in an attempt to reduce the power wielded by donors.

Power Relations

INGOs vs Local NGOs

However, even though field staff is not always in control of the decisions being made under the influence of donors, it is necessary to consider what power field staff in fact do have, and how they wield this power. Even though their projects might be steered by donors, NGO staff—and particularly INGO staff--become vested with more authority once they begin working in communities. Throughout the past decade, INGOs have become perhaps the most influential source of civil service employment and funding for many nations, to the point that, in the words of some scholars, INGOs effectively "own" the situation in places such as Haiti (Buss, 2015). In the case of Haiti, INGOs have carved out a very powerful role for themselves. The foreign aid money that has accompanied INGOs throughout Haiti creates a power dynamic that influences every relationship that the agency has (Schoneberg, 2016). As a result, the relationships birthed by the foreign aid industry have created tensions between local agencies and INGOs and a corresponding power struggle between the Haitian government and INGOs.

With INGOs receiving the bulk of the aid destined for Haiti, tensions have also emerged between local Haitian-led non-profits and large foreign aid agencies (Ramachandran & Walz, 2015). According to Ramachandran and Walz, after the 2010 earthquake, Haitian-led NGOs received only $0.8 million of the reported $9 billion dollars donated to Haiti after the disaster. Why Haitian-led organizations were only given .04% of the original $5.4 million they requested has not been determined. From an outsider perspective, this type of conscious exclusion can be seen as distrust of Haitian-led organizations' ability to handle money, or distrust of Haitian-led organizations' ability to create outputs on the same scale and same level of quality as foreign agencies. More research is needed into the reasoning behind the distribution of funds immediately after the 2010 earthquake and since.

Widening the rift between INGOs and local NGOs is the different understandings of collaboration between NGOs at different 'levels'. Local nonprofit staff members have reported feeling ignored or demeaned by INGOs for not having formal university degrees. Local staff members feel that INGO staff create a space where degrees are prioritized over local knowledge, established relationships with communities, lived experiences, and manpower (Chynoweth et al., 2015). This atmosphere stifles the ability of both parties to collaborate and design impactful solutions: without the space to have a dialogue and critically consider the methods to be used, the communities in need eventually become the real losers. In order to continue their mission, many local NGOs

have resolved to fit in wherever they can and adapt to the uneven relations of power with INGO staff. For example, local NGO staff members will endure working group meetings despite feeling "estranged" and "unappreciated" by international staff (Chynoweth et al., 2015). On the other hand, INGO staff members remark on how they are "seeking equal and balanced relationships" and that any intimidation of local groups is "unintentional" (Chynoweth et al., 2015; Schoneberg, 2016). However, even if INGO staff members do not seek to intimidate staff members of local NGOs, the question remains whether they completely understand the impact of their decisions on the communities where they work, and if they are able to make a long-lasting and positive impact in those communities?

INGOs vs State (Local) Government

While the power INGOs have over local NGOs is openly discussed by staff members of local NGOs, the power INGOs carry with the Haitian government is less openly acknowledged. It has been argued that the mere presence of NGOs in a community begins to weaken local governance structures. Before beginning a single project, INGOs have the capability to "disempower local actors and weaken existing national structures," usually creating new problems in an effort to solve other problems (Schoneberg, 2016). Whether INGOs are in Haiti with the government's 'blessing' or not, as the provider of over 70% of the nation's social services they are more influential

and in some cases seen as stronger than the government. Around 2008, INGOs assumed even more power when, after a three-year strategic plan pursued by the Haitian government had failed to create the expected outcomes, the UN decided to begin coordinating "the work of all stakeholders in peacekeeping" (Zanotti, 2010). While the lack of coordination on part of the national government has long been a concern for the development community, this decision led to a form of quasi-government under the auspices of the UN.

One of the major concerns regarding the relationship between INGOs and the Haitian government is the precedent that INGOs is setting for the government. Without the ability to govern, the Haitian government will continue to be crippled by foreign aid agencies. Foreign aid has become so ingrained in the way that the Haitian government operates that officials have become as reliant on NGOs providing services as much as the locals who receive the service. For example, the government fails to maintain proper public schools or hospitals with the knowledge that community members can choose from several NGO operated schools and hospitals. As Schuller suggests, "Southern states [have] not eroded as much as they have transformed to support neoliberal interests" (2009). This attitude of needing to please NGOs--particularly INGOs--leads local government officials to work as hard as possible to ensure that NGO employees feel comfortable (Pierre-Louis, 2011). This need to please NGOs has been learned from long experience, but it comes at a cost. Because of this dependency, the 'Republic of NGOs' is

thrown into chaos if nations refuse to fund foreign aid, as was the case in the 1990s when foreign aid was canceled after the election of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Such manipulation of foreign aid has long been a favored tactic among developed nations to maintain oversight and political control over receiving nations. Once again echoing the sentiment of critics, INGOs truly do "own" the situation in Haiti (Buss, 2015). One thing that everyone can agree on is that no matter where they came from, who sent them, or whether they can be controlled, NGOs are in Haiti to stay and there has to be a way to make them work well in the context of Haiti.

Correcting Traditional Project Implementation Methods

The Miseducation of Donors

By revisiting the roles donor play in the selection and implementation of projects, we gain a better understanding of the traditional methods NGOs have used in order to find approaches that can be improved. The restrictions imposed on field staff by donors has created a sometimes clinical and one-size-fits-all approach to solving hyper specific problems that require targeted solutions. In an industry where change is hard to quantify, agencies rely heavily on metrics that usually cannot accurately illustrate the state of the communities being served in order to secure continued or increased funding for their projects (Schoneberg, 2016). Deep and meaningful change takes time and sometimes cannot be seen within limited periods of time, but the pressure from donors to create

"quick impact" leads to a focus on projects with short-term and sometimes superficial impact (Schoneberg, 2016). Pearce summarized this pressure to please donors perfectly when he wrote, "the demands of back-donors often compete with what remains a sincere commitment to global change" (2010: 630).

Figure 2: Humanitarian Haiti Cholera Training. Source: World Concern

In order to do away with the mentality of putting donors first within the NGO community, upper level staff members must advocate on behalf of the communities they work in. Aid work cannot be streamlined or robotic like a production line. Field staff needs flexibility, including permission to stray from the original project, the mission, and in some cases even the community where they serve. Such flexibility allows agencies to properly serve their beneficiaries, creating meaningful, long term impact that continues decades after the agency has moved on. On the other hand, such flexibility is misused if agencies jump from aid fad to aid fad to keep donors happy (Pearce, 2010); for example, to secure additional funding, an agency that has strong connections and capabilities in the clean water area may switch to health services even without the necessary expertise.

Accountability

While donors may remain faceless, the brand of the agency and the faces of staff members are closely tied to the work being done in communities. Community members remember what agency worked in their community and the change (or lack of change) that the agency created, but NGOs are nevertheless in a position to leave a trail of failed projects without having to answer to any authorities. While NGOs provide over 70% of Haiti's social services and have actively stripped the government through predatory hiring practices and conscious exclusion of much of its authority, community members and nations all around the world blame the Haitian government for the lack of

development in Haiti (Ramachandran & Walz, 2015). In the words of Pierre-Louis (2011); "Although the government is unaware of the activities of most NGOs in the country, it is nevertheless held accountable by the population when a hurricane or other disaster occurs. Often, the NGOs that are funded to intervene disappear or change their activities. In 2008, after the three hurricanes that destroyed the city of Gonaives in the Artibonite region, the population blamed the government for its ineptitude and the work that the NGOs were doing in the city, which contributed to the destruction" (Pierre-Louis, 2011:198).

Community First

The first step to limiting the power of foreign aid agencies, as proposed by Edmond (2012), is to "work with the Haitian people, listen to their demands and give them control over the reconstruction of their own country" (2012: 450). While it is necessary to reduce the influence of foreign aid agencies on local governance, it is also important to follow the recommendation of academics and local aid officials throughout the industry to let "the Haitian population itself take charge of its own development" (Schoneberg, 2016: 606). Some methods of nurturing participation and ultimately a sense of ownership in projects in a community are: 1) cease the development of projects that act as a band aid instead of resolving deeper issues; 2) hire local staff members in key positions instead of outsourcing positions of influence and power to foreigners; and 3)

involve community members throughout the entire project, not only in specific stages created for community 'buy in' (Edmonds, 2012; Pearce, 2010; Panda, 2007).

Now Haitians 'Own' the Situation: Capacity Building

As reflected upon earlier, it is very difficult to expedite change. With a mountain of work ahead of them, NGO staff members should come into communities with a spirit of change. While it is easy to report how many wells have been installed or how many children have been taught, the "vicious circle" of aid has led development scholars to emphasize the importance of capacity building (Buss, 2015). Capacity building gives communities the opportunity to support themselves long after donors have moved on to the next fad or disaster. However, research shows that projects often act as costly band aids instead of addressing underlying societal problems (Schoneberg, 2016; Buss, 2015). INGOs in Haiti have created an environment where community members are dedicated to accessing the services and resources provided by aid organizations, instead of questioning why those same services are scarce or how to change the systems that are making those services and resources scarce in the first place (Edmond, 2012). Edmond echoes an older hypothesis by James Petras in 1997, that NGOs may be employing a tactic that creates a sense of "empowerment" that never exceeds "certain conditions permitted by the neoliberal state and macro-economy" (2012: 444).

Before stepping foot onto Haitian soil, agencies already have a project they are looking to implement, but due to bad press after the 2010 earthquake agencies are now careful about seeking out community input on projects. Schuller recalls a local aid worker begging an agency to shift their priorities to something the community terribly needs and is *asking* for (2009). Interactions such as these have created a "rebirth" of grassroots efforts from Haitian-led organizations, "organisation populaires" (Edmond, 2012). These organizations are working to activate communities to fight for what is important to them, advocating for officials to be held accountable, and delivering useful and necessary services. Organizations such as Partners in Health, for example, are training doctors and nurses and providing basic health services, all in the hope that the organization itself eventually will become obsolete (Ramachandran & Walz, 2015; Zanotti, 2010).

In addition to failing to listen to the communities they work in, organizations are failing to incorporate proper capacity building strategies in the communities where they work. In addition, capacity building in Haiti should also extend beyond community members to local and national government. Large organizations such as the Red Cross and the United Nations should work towards preparing the Haitian government to providing for its citizens again. After decades of watching other powers provide most of the nation's budget and services, national government officials have seen their capacities to govern reduced. For example, in 1999, USAID contracted a US-based consulting firm to "sidestep" the Haitian government and provide basic health services, illustrating how

the distrust of the Haitian government that donor nations have held since the Papa Doc dictatorship is crippling the Haitian government further. Ultimately, NGOs cannot replace the state and Haitians want to return power to their government. In the end, the only ones who can help Haiti are Haitians (Ramachandran & Walz, 2015; Edmond, 2012; Schoneberg, 2016).

CHAPTER 2:

DISASTERS AND FOREIGN INTERVENTIONS IN HAITI

Before debating the need for NGOs in Haiti, it is important to understand Haiti's political and economic history. One of the most common phrases I heard when speaking to members of different organizations was the importance of "working where there is need." By gaining a basic, surface level of understanding of Haiti's economic state, we can better understand how it was so easily transformed into the "Republic of NGOs".

Since its founding as an independent nation, the western half of the island of Hispaniola has dealt with constant natural disasters, shifts in leadership, interventions by global powers, and an influx of NGOs. It has long been thought that Haiti has faced a unique set of circumstances that have caused it to develop slower than other nations. At a fifth the size of the state of Florida, the small country has faced multiple foreign interventions, decades of political instability, and some of the worst natural disasters in the western hemisphere. In this chapter, I will revisit the history of foreign intervention in Haiti. I will examine the events that followed the Haitian revolution and the lead-up to the notorious 2010 earthquake, the rise of NGOs after the earthquake, and their effect on the citizens of Haiti.

In its infancy as a nation, Haiti struggled to stand alone after gaining independence from France. After winning freedom, Haiti was unable to trade with many of its neighbors. Authorities in other nations with colonies in the Americas feared that the successful Haitian revolution would inspire slaves in other places to also seek freedom. For over a decade after gaining freedom, Haiti was unable to trade with most nations due to pressure placed on other nations from France, Haiti's previous colonizer. Seeking better opportunities for trading from neighboring nations, Haiti agreed to pay 120 francs -later reduced to 90- in restitution to France for their loss due to Haiti becoming a free republic (Henochsberg, 2016). Some have argued that the decade of forced isolation leading into a century of paying a hefty debt undermined Haiti's development (Henochsberg, 2016; Edmonds, 2012; Schuller, 2007).

Following in the footsteps of France, the United States finally recognized Haiti as a self-ruling republic in 1862, 58 years after it became a free nation and over 40 years after it began paying restitution to France. From 1915 to 1934 the United States occupied Haiti in an effort to "restore political stability" (Labrador, 2018). During this time the U.S. government controlled many facets of the Haitian government, including national security and finance. During the U.S. occupation of Haiti, the United States government imposed racial segregation, forced labor, and press censorship, and deposed presidents and legislators who opposed the U.S. presence (Labrador, 2018). In an article penned for the New Yorker, Danticat (2015) remembers the stories shared by his family members

about the constant pressure that having foreign military in their neighborhoods placed on their lives. One scar still left from the U.S. occupation of Haiti was the loss of land and of citizens after the redrawing of the Hispaniola border. Danticat remembers how the day after the US moved the border in 1929, many Haitians woke up newly Haitian-Dominican. Decisions made by both France, United States and other jarring events in Haiti's past have thus led to the country we see before us today.

Faced with a low GDP and a lack of natural resources, Haiti has suffered an unequal and even subservient relationship with other countries throughout the years. A quick overview of the uneven relationships with major donor nations and countries in the region helps us better understand how Haiti has not developed as fast as other nations similar in age:

- The dependent and often tense relationship between Haiti and the United States is unstable, changing with every new administration (Haitian or American).
- Until 2010, no French President had ever visited Haiti.
- In 1937, Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo carried out the Parsley Massacre, killing Haitians and Dominicans who were "dark enough" to be seen as Haitian (Phillip, 2015). In 2015, the Dominican government began patrolling neighborhoods with large migrant populations in an effort to find and deport people of Haitian descent.

- During the Duvalier regime from the later 50s to late 80, many Haitians fled to the French speaking province of Quebec, Canada. At the same time, Haiti is also one of Quebec's largest recipients of aid and a large number of Canadian organizations are working in Haiti. This relationship illustrates both the brain drain and dependence on other nations that have traditionally hindered Haiti's ability to develop independently.

Even though the Haitian government was not stable before the US occupation, the heavily armed presence of the United States coupled with the never ending debt to France also did not contribute to making Haiti a stronger nation. Instead, Haiti became dependent on the United States as its largest trading partner, and the United States became home to the largest diaspora of Haitians. Haiti's dependency on the United States is thus emblematic of the country's relationship with other nations in North America, the Caribbean, and South America as primarily a recipient of foreign aid and a sender of large numbers of migrants. While the relationship with France and the United States has always been strained, the foreign aid donated by these nations are some of the largest. Not always a topic of discussion, Haiti also has strong relationships with the Republic of China and Germany. Due to its location near the United States and the Panama Canal, Haiti is seen as a strategic country.

As mentioned earlier, after becoming the first free black republic Haiti spent over a century paying France the modern equivalent of $21 billion in reparations to former slave owners for the loss of their slaves. Sixty years later the "poorest nation in the western hemisphere" is still desperately trying to recover from such a large monetary loss.

According to the World Bank, Haiti's gross national income has been steadily rising since 2004 before a predictable downturn following the 2010 earthquake (World Bank, 2018). While the island is prone to natural disasters, two-fifth of its citizens are dependent on the agriculture sector which is particularly vulnerable to disasters (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.). Last year, an estimated 30% of the nation's nearly $9 billion annual GDP came from remittances (World Bank, 2018). While Haiti during the colonial era made France so incredibly wealthy that it became known as "The French Crown Jewel", today Haiti imports about three times more than it exports, leaving its economy heavily reliant on its major trade partner, the United States.

The political instability in Haiti has contributed to foster an environment that is not conducive to international partnerships. Since it first became a republic, Haiti has had over 40 presidents. The majority of these presidents were either forced out of their position due to coups or killed. For almost thirty years during the late 20th century, other countries avoided Haiti as the brutal Duvalier regime sent the country into social chaos. Between the constant threat of political or military action from other nations, the lack of

cooperation with a nation made of ex-slaves, and debt to one country or another that looms over the head of every Haitian citizen, it is easy to see how Haiti fell into such disarray. It is also easy to see how it was the perfect landing ground for thousands of NGOs.

Long before the 2010 earthquake, Haiti had already become host to a large NGO sector. Kevin Edmond of NACLA reminds us that even before the earthquake Haiti had an estimated 10,000 NGOs working within its borders, and today, 80% of Haiti's basic services are provided through NGOs (Edmond, 2010). It is difficult to pinpoint the exact time that Haiti transformed into this "Republic of NGOs", but one event that allowed Haiti to become home to so many NGOs occurred in 1954 when Hurricane Hazel ravaged the island for three long days (Schwartz, 2015). Once the dust settled, Care International came to Haiti to aid in the relief efforts. According to Schwartz, when the charities saw the widespread illiteracy and inefficient public health in Haiti, the American and European nations began to donate more to helping Haiti. By 1970, Haiti's aid had exploded to the point that it was already the "most aided country in the western hemisphere" (Schwartz, 2015). By 1986, Haiti had fully transformed into the "Republic of NGOs." NGOs had already assumed responsibility for the provision of healthcare, water, and education, and had started running food and agriculture agencies. NGOs had become so powerful and necessary for the day-to-day life of Haitians across the country that in 2001, the Haitian government was crippled when aid agencies imposed an "aid

embargo". Without the resources being supplied by NGOs, the country struggled to make ends meet. Haiti had become desperately reliant on international aid in order to conduct any business, and this reliance was soon to be painfully obvious following the 2010 earthquake.

On January 12th, 2010 at 4:53 pm Haiti was hit by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake. According to news reports at the time, 200,000 people died and millions were displaced (CNN, 2017). The cost to repair the damages was estimated at $7.8 billion, an amount greater than Haiti's entire GDP the year prior (Ramachandran & Walz, 2015). The earthquake not only destroyed or damaged 80 percent of rural housing, but it also destroyed countless public buildings, schools, medical facilities and government offices (Cook, 2015) . To this day Haiti is still trying to recover its infrastructure, its finances, and its society from the devastating earthquake, even while the country continues to be impacted almost yearly by other natural disasters.

According to the United Nations Office of Special Envoy for Haiti, $13.34 Billion aid was pledged by international agencies between 2010 and 2020 (CNN, 2017). There have been many reports and articles written about the mismanagement of the donation by foreign aid agencies. Earlier this year, Rachel Estabrook of Colorado's Public Radio station acknowledged that despite the great amounts of money donated to Haiti from private citizens, companies, and countries, many people in Haiti were still living in temporary housing and struggling to get clean water.

One reason behind the slow recovery despite the large infusion of foreign aid is the methods used by many NGOs as they develop their projects. Since the Haitian government is unstable and government officials have been known to pocket aid money, aid agencies such as USAID or the Red Cross assume control of every aspect of a project in order to prevent corruption. After the earthquake it was common practice for foreign aid organizations to employ foreign contractors instead of local workers to lead projects. In an NPR article from 2015, Jake Johnston of the Washington-based Center for Economic Policy and Research explains that it costs USAID $33,000 to build one home using foreign contractors (Johnston, 2015). In comparison, the non-profit Mission of Hope spends five times less by employing local contractors. Another possible reason for the slow recovery can be attributed to large foreign aid agencies deciding autonomously the scope of their activity in the country, instead of carefully considering the actual needs of Haiti (Ramachandran & Walz, 2015). After the earthquake, the U.S. and other donors allocated funds and focused on projects that directly went against the wishes of the Haitian government. The method of mishandling aid, not hiring locals, flooding the country with foreign workers and not prioritizing projects requested by the government has cultivated an unfavorable relationship between residents of the country and NGOs (Ramachandran & Walz, 2015). In a CBS story on the relationship between post disaster Haiti and INGOs, Caribbean correspondent for the Miami Herald, Jacqueline Charles voices her experience with INGOs in Haiti; “oftentimes, these NGOs come into the

country, they don't talk to the people on the ground, they don't ask them what their needs are, and they come in with certain assumptions. They carry this out, and then they run up against all of these variable obstacles. And then they just throw their hands up in the air and say, 'You know what? We tried.'" (CBS News, 2015).

In the years following the earthquake, Haiti also had to attempt to recover from many other natural disasters, leading many NGOs to focus their work on emergency relief rather than institution- and capacity-building. In 2012, Hurricane Sandy caused many deaths and cases of disease. The hurricane was followed by a three-year drought that left many starving and unable to work. In 2016, Hurricane Matthew killed approximately 1,000 people while destroying many homes and adding more cases of disease, such as cholera, to the island.

The level of capability and accountability of NGOs in Haiti have been discussed for decades. In 2010, the media shed light on the practice of mismanagement of aid money. It was not until then that politicians, scholars, and others in and outside of Haiti began to openly question the traditional practices of such agencies. Today the role and work of aid agencies in Haiti have been opened up to questioning and discussion. In his article *Beyond Good Intentions: The Structural Limitations of NGOs in Haiti*, Kevin Edmond challenges the broad stroke of savior with which NGOs in Haiti had been painted for so long (Edmond, 2012). What began as a humanitarian effort to help those injured and left homeless after a natural disaster soon evolved into a quasi-governmental

apparatus. During Aristide's second administration, an economic embargo was placed on the nation. The embargo left the government unable to pay public employees and teachers or to purchase necessary supplies for local hospitals.

Seeing the gaps in the government's ability to look after the Haitian people, NGOs begin offering these services to communities. This left the Haitian community not only dependent on NGOs for basic needs, but also planted a seed of doubt that the Haitian government would be able to provide services as efficiently as foreign aid agencies. Because of this, today over 70% of Haiti's social services--education, agriculture, health-care—are provided by foreign aid agencies. As the largest provider of social welfare to the residents of Haiti, the NGO sector has grown quite powerful and independent from the Haitian government, which in turn limits the opportunity for Haitian government officials to push forward any of their own development initiatives.

For over two hundred years Haiti has unsuccessfully tried to rule itself. It is incredibly difficult for the Haitian government to develop best practices and a sense of normalcy when there has always been another power working as a separate government within the nation. On the one hand, the Haitian government has had difficulty preventing corruption within its ranks; on the other hand, in the words of Ricardo Seitenfus, formerly the Organization of American States Special Representative to Haiti, "...there cannot be a permanent policy of substituting the NGOs for the state" for the nation to stand on its own two feet (Peixoto, 2010).

Now that we have begun to recognize the power that foreign aid has over Haiti, and the ways in which this situation limits the country's ability to remain autonomous, we can reflect on how this colors the way that local residents interact with the work done by NGOs. A Haitian senior staff member from UN-Habitat Haiti revealed that many community members believe that NGOs are not actually doing anything. When asked about barriers to working with residents due to current attitudes towards NGOs, the staff member responded, "They have not seen peace. So when you tell them the cavalry is coming they say, well, I'm timid. They only thing I see is cars, you know, going in and out, and I'm very skeptical. Not to say, another thing they want to say: You guys are just, whatever you're doing, you're kind of using the money but not building anything for me. It's not justified. I have to say perception matters".

After many reports of misuse of aid funds after 2010, many NGOs have begun taking a more community engagement approach towards working in the country. Unfortunately, the memories of past faux pas have caused locals to be more skeptical about the help they are offered. A senior staff member at another NGO reflected on how traditionally NGOs would come to communities with plans and begin projects without even attempting to open a dialogue with the locals or the government. Such lack of community engagement has led to failed projects throughout the country, which in turn prompts justified cynicism towards new initiatives on the part of residents.

Figure 3: UN-Habitat Executive Director Walks Recently Built Footpath in Port-au-Prince, Haiti (2013). Source: UN Habitat

After so many years of being subject to the whims of foreign aid agencies, a picture about how NGOs traditionally thought of locals became clear. In our interview, the staff member from Anseye Pou Ayiti shared her feelings on how local residents had routinely been treated in the past: "Myself and my team believe that solutions already exists within the community but they have been told over generations that they're not good enough or that they are 'poor' or that they are 'underdeveloped'". A staff member from World Neighbors shared similar experiences from the communities where she

works, saying that "... the government does not take them seriously when they are asking for help. Sometimes they come back to [us] for help". Though the old top-down development practice that created this atmosphere of abandonment and worthlessness in the Haitian community has been phased out for years now, the sensitivity around NGOs remains within many communities throughout the country. In the following chapter, I will describe the current methods used by NGOs (foreign and local; large and small), to cultivate an environment of engagement and a sense of possibility within the communities where they work. Such methods may prove key to helping Haiti progress and release its dependency in a way that it has not been able to in decades.

CHAPTER 3:

DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES IN HAITI AND THEIR PRACTICES

Agencies Interviewed

Co-founded by Negine Paul Deroly and T. Morgan Dixon, Anseye Pou Ayiti - or Teach For Haiti in English- is a relatively young movement that offers local Haitian civic leaders the opportunity to advance educational equity in their community (Anseye Pou Ayiti). Working primarily in underserved and rural communities, Anseye Pou Aytiti (APA) has been able to partner with over 46 schools since its inception in 2009 (Anseye Pou Ayiti, 2017). Grassroots in its model and practice, APA creates change by "modeling civic leadership, rooting itself in Haitian culture, maintaining a network of alumni, partnering to ensure maximum impact, and continuous monitoring and evaluation (APA). Speaking to the co-founder and CEO, Deroly, I was able to get a better understanding of how APA empowers communities to work towards equitable education.

As one of the older organizations interviewed, World Concern's Senior Desk Officer, Susan Talbot, brought over 60 years of company experience to the conversation. After working for 20 years in several developing nations, World Concern shifted its model away from "handouts" towards working alongside communities to develop long-term solutions. According to the organization's website, "today, [their] emphasis is

on holistic community development as [they] equip villages to determine and implement their own development projects. By allowing families and communities to express their own needs and use existing resources to address these needs, the transformation will last into future generations" (World Concern).

Described by local Haitian staff as an international organization with grassroots methods, World Neighbor works in two *arrondissements* (districts) of the Department of Artibonite in Haiti. With a limited staff, the agency focuses on a wide variety of issues within the community: saving and credit groups, agriculture, disaster preparedness and more. Similar to the World Concern, World Neighbors views its approach as a way to reduce "dependence on external aid" and support "self-reliance" (World Neighbors). According to the agency's website, "World Neighbors focuses on training and educating communities to find lasting solutions to the challenges they face – hunger, poverty, and disease – rather than giving them food, money or constructing buildings" (World Neighbors).

As a fairly young initiative, UN-Habitat has become a well-known actor in the disaster relief community. Unlike the other organizations interviewed, UN-Habitat has practiced a more macro approach when working in developing nations. UN-Habitat - as a collective, not only the Haiti team- works by setting urban development goals that are achieved through cooperation with the major public, private, or hybrid actors. According to the UN Habitat website, these players are referred to as "committed partners, relevant

stakeholders, and urban actors, including at all levels of government as well as the private sector" (UN Habitat).

Roles and Relationships of Agencies

When working within a complex social and urban landscape, relationships are crucial to the impact and longevity of a project. There have been many ways of referring to the act of creating or curating relationship to drive a development project: community buy-in, neighborhood investment, and community engagement are the modern buzzwords being used within the international aid, relief, and development arena. The roles that the different organizations played and the forms of relationships they pursued were wide in scope and varied. Looking at the range and intensity of each organization helps us better understand the mission, goals, and potential long-term impact and sustainability of every unique project.

In terms of the agencies' relationship with the Haitian government, UN-Habitat was the only actor that was in regular and substantive communication with any state agency, perhaps due to its standing as a government-funded agency. While most representatives of the other organizations maintained they worked *in spite* of the government, my interviewee at UN-Habitat affirmed that the agency worked in agreement with the government. However, even though all of the other organizations asserted that they did not have strong ties to any state agency, many of them expressed

interest in one day working in tandem with state officials. Deroly, co-founder of Anseye Pou Ayiti (APA) and representatives of the World Neighbors team all expressed a hope that the communities and work they are doing will be acknowledged and supported by the government in the future. Since 2010, the Haitian federal government has made great strides towards developing relationships with NGOs. However, it is still unclear what role the government wants to play in working with NGOs, and if this renewed interest in collaborating with NGOs will trickle down to the smaller organizations such as APA and World Neighbors.

In addition to their relationship with the national government, it is important to assess the working relationships individual agencies have with each other. Until recently, it could be argued that Haiti was the Wild West of NGOs, especially shortly after the 2010 earthquake. Without an accurate census of how many organizations were in the country and exactly what projects they were working on, many began to question their influence or direction—especially since agencies often seemed to be working with little coordination. When asked about the issue of inter-agency collaboration, the representatives of the organizations gave vastly different views on cooperating with the NGO next door. In order to establish its own projects, many organizations intentionally seek hard-to-reach communities or communities that do not already have an NGO present. When asked about the relationship World Concern has with other NGOs, Talbot responded: “We tend to try to find those areas where other agencies aren't working.

Because we don't want to be working on top of other agencies." Later he added, however, that "we also think it is important to collaborate with other NGOs because we don't want to leave gaps or work on top of them". Typically, to "collaborate" suggests working together or a partnership towards a collective goal, but from the perspective of World Concern collaborating refers to coordinating efforts to avoid overlapping in the field.

Unlike the others, the UN-Habitat found great value in partnering with other NGOs. When detailing the work being done, Louis Jadotte, director of the UN-Habitat unit in Haiti, described the roles that every partner played. According to Jadotte, in order to bring projects to fruition, the Red Cross worked extensively on the social dynamics of the community while USAID was dubbed as UN-Habitat's "implementation partner:"

That unit delegated the Red Cross and said okay since you are going to be on the ground you coordinate the social organizations' activities. Red Cross, said to all the coalition partners, to please intervene using the same the channels so that there is less confusion to the beneficiaries and also there is right messaging to the beneficiaries. So that the beneficiaries understand that all the partners coming to the ground that there is a concerted effort, an integrated effort to solve the problems that they are facing so that they orient themselves (Jadotte: 2018).

In this specific case, large international foreign aid groups made a conscious effort to work together. While critics may argue that such a focus on partnership may be motivated by the need for positive publicity--in the past major NGOs had been chastised for being wasteful--the benefits to the practice of working together cannot be denied, fiscally or socially.

Finally, the relationship established between agencies and communities and community members is critical for the effectiveness of aid relief and the sustainability of projects. Every representative interviewed praised the practice of working in partnership with communities. The interviewee from Anseye Pou Ayiti reflected on how the organization nurtured relationships with stakeholders in all the communities where they worked. UN-Habitat recognized the importance of respecting the community members' lived experiences before beginning a project. And the representative of World Neighbors spent a lot of the conversation discussing the need to understand the community and engage with locals long before a project is introduced. Following suit, the official at World Concern also expressed the need to "walk alongside" communities. However, although all the agencies were strong advocates of relationship building, they all pursued slightly different approaches to gain community trust. One noticeable improvement in the majority of the agencies was their staffing. Many of the organizations spoken to were Haitian led; a socially impactful improvement that will be unpacked further in the upcoming section.

Methods and Approaches to Community Ownership

With scandals plaguing NGOs in the past years, the idea of trust has become a principal concern for NGOs, the nations they work for and in, and the community members that they seek to serve. Possibly due to the scrutiny from stakeholders, many

agencies have shifted their conventional methods in an effort to place more value and effort on building relationships with members of the communities that they work in. Using insights received during the interview process, we will be able to gain a better understanding of some of the relationship building strategies being pursued by the four agencies.

"Listening" was a key ingredient in nurturing a connection with community members. World Neighbors, Anseye Pou Ayiti, and UN-Habitat all acknowledged the power in simply listening to locals on key issues. When asked about where their confidence as a movement come from, Deroly of Anseye Pou Ayiti remarked, "We wanted to make sure that we went into communities where we listened. Literally. Listened to be able to hear what they felt would be the best solutions and best investments." Beginning their projects with a listening tour has helped Anseye Pou Ayiti provide targeted services to each unique community and create an environment of empowerment for all of those affected the program. Deroly agrees that listening can be the best tool available to NGOs; noting, "We understand that there are local assets and local solutions that have just not been given the platform or the amplification that they deserve. That's why listening, honestly, is what we believe to be leadership." Listening to the experiences and opinions of communities not only reflects due diligence and necessary research on the part of the NGO, but it is also key to beginning to lay down the foundation for the years-long relationship that should be taking place.

Echoing the same sentiment as Deroly, the director of UN- Habitat Haiti understands the effort that must go into forging a working relationship with a community before developing any plans for a project. At the beginning of our interview, the director outlined the roles that every partner played in executing a plan. While UN-Habitat- Haiti was the key implementation partner, Red Cross built the social capacity for the project. "When the Red Cross comes and starts researching neighborhoods, [they ask themselves] … Who is going to tell us that we are doing is right or wrong? ... Who is going to be our partner?" This line of questioning from the director is informed by a concern about developing trust, and such trust will help ensure the project is successful and that community members will be honest in their opinion and open about the needs of the community.

After both the agency and the communities feel that there has been ample listening and opportunities for trust building, projects enter their next phase: developing the structure of the community partnership. After the mismanagement of the 2010 Haitian Earthquake, it had become evident that the missions of NGOs were not aligning with their roles. A common pattern of action for NGOs before 2010 was to follow the top-down methods of project implementation. While there were a lot of NGOs partnering with members of the community and engaging in participatory methods of development, large charitable NGOs such as the American Red Cross established themselves as parental or umbrella organizations. These top-down organizations created an environment

where communities were only beneficiaries and not partners, leading to both resentment and passivity on the part of community members. Community members felt powerless to create projects on their own terms.

In response to a question about barriers they face when working with a community, the representative of World Concern revealed the reason why they choose to work apart from other NGOs: “We have also found it difficult to work in areas other NGOs had come in and just done distribution and left. Because then that is the expectation. You have created a dependency mentality.” It can be argued whether a dependency mentality has been created, or communities have been conditioned by the aid structure to play the role of client. In either case, agencies have now begun shifting their methods in order to create a more equitable relationship with communities. As a suggestion for other agencies, the staff member at World Concern asserts, “when you go into a community with the mentality that you are there to partner with them, and to help them to own their own development, and you show them ways that they have the power to change and can influence and make things better for themselves. It's dignifying”.

Within the context of Haiti, partnering with communities does not only mean having a strong relationship with the members of the community, but also bringing the community together under one voice. According to Angeline Tirogene, country representative for World Neighbors, “NGOs in Haiti cannot work with people alone so now the people must form organizations so that NGOs can work with them”. In some

instances, this approach can protect communities from NGOs who end up doing more harm than intended, since communities will have a stronger voice in their engagement with the agency. On the other hand, due to the financial burden of obtaining status as a Community Based Organization (CBO), communities with limited means and weak organizational capacity may be unable to partner with agencies on projects. For those communities who are able to develop a formal organization, their power and ability to have their voice heard has grown exponentially. Working with CBOs forces accountability on all parties, unlike in the past when projects may have received little oversight. From the perspective of UN-Habitat, such community organizations--similar to neighborhood associations in the United States--are referred to as *Tables de Cartier* (TDC), or "neighborhood tables". Such TDCs are created by the Red Cross in the district of Canaan outside of the capital city of Port Au Prince to help agencies better execute projects. As Jadotte with UN Habitat said, such TDCs are grassroots organizations essential for sustainability of projects:

> TDC is a grassroots organization created [by the American Red Cross]. It is not pure grassroots on their own, it is more of social engineering of [the] grassroots organization. When somebody comes, when the Red Cross comes and starts researching neighborhoods. What are we going to map for? Who is going to tell us that we are doing is right or wrong? What we can do, what we can't do? Who is going to be our partner when we have to question people who are already there? Everyone wants projects. Who is the partner? (Jadotte: 2018).

Based on UN-Habitat Haiti's account, it is apparent that aid agencies and the Haitian government both agree that a stable, trustworthy, and organized collective of voices is necessary when tackling projects that will affect community members.

According to Anseye Pou Aytiti, listening allows the agency to identify "best solutions and best investments". Many agencies believe that self-realized solutions are an NGO's best opportunity to produce long lasting and impactful projects. Similar to Anseye Pou Ayiti, World Concern encourages self-realized solutions. In the words of Talbot, "we believe in empowering communities to identify their difficulties and they come up with their own solutions". While there have been thousands of NGOs working in Haiti in the past decades, there has not been a shift towards the better for the country. One cause of this could be the lack of local knowledge and local partnering going into NGO funded projects. Talbot with World Concern said it best: "it is important for us to walk alongside, not top to bottom, in identifying and solving problems";

However, self-realized solutions are only as good as the implementation of them. When discussing relationship-building and project impact, it is very important that communities have their voices heard—but also *see* that their voices are being heard. According to interviewees, local residents must see themselves in projects being developed in their neighborhoods. However, the interviewees all pursued different methods of incorporating local ideas and local participation. World Neighbors has a practice of never staying in a community for longer than seven years. This strategy places

the burden of responsibility for the outcome of the project on the community. As indicated by the director, “that means they need to use themselves to develop themselves. We work with them to let themselves go”. In other words, World Neighbors has created a model of mentoring communities to not only take part in projects but to take lead and maintain projects once the agency leaves the neighborhood.

World Concern and Anseye Pou Ayiti take a similar approach of allowing the residents to carry the responsibility for the progress of their own community. In the case of Anseye Pou Ayiti, they recruit teachers from within the communities they are working with. According to Deroly, “we have to recruit from the community that we said we want to partner with. Those who've experienced the inequity are the ones who should be leaving the movement to end it.” It is important that community members understand that the NGO is working *for* the community. That means that the way the agency interacts with residents is the most important measure of the success of a project.

As a larger entity founded by national governments instead of private donors, UN-Habitat incorporates the community in a more clinical and top-down way. When describing the role the community plays in the creation of the project, the director explained: “The first is making them understand those maps. Secondly, understanding some criteria to develop improvements. And then have them come up with their proposal. Then we treat them a bit. So that they can still recognize that it is theirs. And then we have them appropriate it so that it becomes theirs”. Unlike the other organizations where

the projects begin based on community interest and are implemented and maintained by the community, UN-Habitat limits community engagement to certain moments: moments when the community members are allowed to share their thoughts, moments where the community shares ideas and, finally moments where the community shares responsibility. While the UN Habitat's size and position as a inter-governmental agency makes it more challenging to pursue the sort of grassroots approach taken by smaller NGOs, their method of "scheduled community input" may have a negative impact on the longevity and results of their projects.

In the same vein as incorporating ideas for projects, it is the responsibility of an agency to incorporate community concerns and interests. Community forums have become a very popular source of decision making for organizations in Haiti. CBOs are run in a very similar way as city council or neighborhood association meetings. The community group has a leader but community members are invited to listen or speak. Decisions affecting the neighborhood are discussed; this decision usually revolves around an NGO project. Many of these groups, organizations, or committees are created for the sole purpose of working with NGOs. As mentioned earlier by the director of World Neighbors, NGOs cannot work with individual people, only with recognized CBOs. Many CBOs have been created by NGOs due to the cost associated with being recognized as a CBO by the government. During our discussion, the staff member of World Concern described how their organization helps communities form

"decision-making committees:" "Communities already have a governing structure, so we don't go in a set up a government… We have them create community committees. We train them to actually become the mobilizers in their communities in hygiene, water management, agriculture. We have them form cooperatives so that they have more empowerment in the marketplace."

All organizations interviewed referenced the governing structures already in place within the communities they work in. It would be a huge disservice to both the communities being served and the NGOs working with them to not use these structures to improve the sustainability of projects. Once the project is completed, it is these same governing structures that will ensure the project is supported and improved for generations to come. As the director of World Neighbors said, emphasizing the importance of strengthening communities' ability to sustain projects once the agency leaves: "We come to the community, we talk to the people, we help build them and then we leave".

Ultimately, leaving is one of the most difficult challenges for NGOs. Due to Haiti's position in the Caribbean Sea, it is frequently pelted with one natural disaster after another, rarely with enough time to recover. Because there will most likely always be another natural disaster on its way to Haiti, it is crucial that NGOs leave their communities with the capability to aid themselves. By sponsoring programs and projects that intentionally nurture an environment that promotes self-realized solutions,

established organized committees, and empowers communities to speak on their own behalf, NGOs can create more resilient communities.

CHAPTER 4:

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through this description of NGOs and their work in Haiti, some common techniques and strategies have become apparent. In this chapter, I discuss some of the overarching themes emerging from this research and recommend some opportunities for improvement. As an outsider looking in, it is easy to suspect methods and list flaws. Furthermore, the distance I have maintained as a researcher prevents me from understanding the many intricate considerations that need to be taken by directors and staff members. On the other hand, this same distance has allowed me to examine the situation in the country and aid industry as a whole. Drawing on this perspective, this chapter refocuses the conversation from the common focus on financial mismanagement of large agencies to the less considered, but equally important, failure to engage with community members in the development and execution of projects.

Based on my review of the common community engagement methods used by these agencies in Haiti, I have identified several core opportunities for community development, or, rather, community re-education. My findings suggest that NGOs have missed key chances to develop not only the capacities of community members, but also that of local agencies and the Haitian national government. This chapter will focus on

three general themes that have plagued Haiti for decades: the power problem, the ownership problem, and the capacity problem. Continuing where Schuller left off in his article, "Haiti's 200-Year Menage-a-Trois" (Schuller, 2007), I will question the motives behind some methods, applaud other approaches, and recommend steps for improving the effectiveness of aid provision in Haiti. I will begin by questioning the power that foreign agencies hold in Haiti, then argue for the need for more spaces that create genuine community participation and ownership, and finally, partnering these two themes to guide a much needed conversation on how intentional capacity building can and should be incorporated throughout all categories of NGOs in Haiti.

The Power Problem

Echoing Schoneberg, INGOs carry power simply by existing (2017). It can be argued that this power was given to them by local residents; however, when looking at the history of foreign intervention in Haiti since the country's inception, INGOs have gained power commensurate with the amount of money they have funneled into the country. As long as INGOs control the aid money, they will continue to have the power to direct development projects in the country. While many development projects have had positive impacts (Schoneberg, 2017), other projects have merely reproduced a significant, long-term problem: lack of ability by local communities to recover from

major natural disasters, and lack of capacity among local organizations to assist communities.

During my research, I discovered that local Haitian-led NGOs have routinely been excluded from the funding stream, especially after the 2010 crisis (Ramachandran and Walz, 2015). Even though many INGOs claim that they have worked in partnership with local partners, it is unclear how these partnerships actually operate (Schoneberg, 2017). When one party is financially reliant on the other, the partnership shifts into a form of collaboration. While in a partnership both parties have equal opportunity to express themselves without risk of retribution, in a collaborative relationship the stronger party may dominate and reject compromises with the weaker party. In such a collaboration framework, INGOs retain power to select projects and implementation methods. This approach may do a disservice to communities, since INGOs are likely to pursue project based on the wants of donors instead of the needs of community members. This awkward tension is not only observed between foreign and local agencies, but also between foreign agencies and the local government.

As stated earlier, NGOs provide over 70% of basic human services in Haiti. After speaking to multiple agencies, it became abundantly clear that the government was a secondary if not tertiary actor in the development arena in Haiti. One agency official glossed over the role that government played when asked about their relationship with the Haitian government, while another agency official suggested that they worked “in spite

of" the Haitian government. In fact, according to interviewees, many organizations are working in Haiti completely without oversight by the government, and many agencies work without considering how their work fits into the vision that the Haitian government has for the country. These somewhat shadowy operations have created an environment of distrust throughout the nation regarding the true goals of INGOs. Although all of the NGO representatives interviewed readily described how they work with community members, it was unclear how their work corresponded with that of other agencies or with the government. Ultimately, when communities look towards foreign agencies to fill the role of their government, deterioration of civil society ensues. At the same time, local Haitian-led agencies do not have the power to work alone and the Haitian government has become severely weakened.

The Community Engagement Problem

The agencies I interviewed sought to foster the creation of community based organizations (CBO) in order to work with communities. The Haitian government created this policy in order to curb unwanted projects and mitigate the mismanagement of funds. While CBOs were created as a form of protection and ultimately a source of power for communities, these organizations are not necessarily reflective of the interests of communities, may be reproducing uneven relations of power within communities, and may also be manipulated by external actors. Only after the issue of uneven power

relations has been resolved can aid agencies begin to authentically empower community members and lead to real community ownership of projects. Such community ownership has been identified as key to long-term sustainability of projects and has become the top priority among INGOs. However, if community engagement is limited to a presentation to the community instead of a dialogue, projects will continue to collapse quickly after completion.

Ownership of a project also means community members should have authority to lead the project. In the case of the local agencies I interviewed, they explained that they only provided the funding while community members actually implemented and ran the projects. Anseye Pou Ayiti and World Neighbors understood that while they have the financial resources to propel communities forward, community members had the most valuable resource: knowledge of what their community needed and understanding of what their community was capable of. Unlike larger agencies, the smaller Haitian-led agencies took a more holistic view of all the tools in their possession. In the words of a staff member at Anseye Pou Ayiti, solutions already exist within communities. The role of the NGO is to bring in techniques and methods that have been tried and tested in order to empower these community members to re-cast themselves in a role different from the one that they have been traditionally given. In order for true and deep impact to occur in these communities, residents have to take ownership in the future of their community. Two unknown speakers in Schoneberg's article, "NGO Partnerships in Haiti," said it

best: “[You] cannot develop another person. This person can only develop [themselves]” through “concerted discussions, concerted analysis of problems, but also the concerted search for solutions” (quoted in Schoneberg, 2017). In other words, NGOs will not be the ones to ‘save’ Haiti, but through purposeful community engagement and intentional dialogue they can be the ones who lead Haiti.

The Capacity Building Problem

The true mission of all NGOs in Haiti should be capacity building. Agencies that have the opportunity to work with the government should be training officials on how to continue to support their communities and how to manage finances, agencies that have partnerships with local agencies should be educating them on how to expand and work with the government, and agencies that specialize in local empowerment should be creating the next leaders and support all methods of advocacy for basic services.

Beginning at the top, NGOs have surgically excluded the Haitian government from participating in the aid sector (Buss, 2015). Crying corruption, foreign nations have decided that it would be best if the Haitian government did not take part in the rebuilding of their own nation. After the 2010 earthquake, less than 1% of the over $9 billion pledged to aid in the reconstruction of Haiti went to the government (Knox, 2015). In a country where the government is routinely excluded from development decisions due to lack of resources and a history of foreign interference, it should be a priority of major

NGOs, especially foreign government funded ones—such as UN-Habitat and the multiple divisions of the Red Cross--to begin assisting the government in assuming responsibility for disaster mitigation and provision of basic services.

The first step to rebuilding the Haitian government is to welcome officials back into the conversation, since the Haitian people would like their own government to offer these basic services (Ramachandran & Walz, 2015). Indeed, the Haitian-led agencies I interviewed saw themselves as giving the Haitian government a jump start by already managing basic service provisions. Anseye Pou Aytiti encouraged the Ministry of Education to come to their schools and learn from their work. In doing so, this organization sees its services as not solely benefitting a specific community but rather providing models for the entire island. This illustrates the ways in which this endogenous organization is focusing its work on the future of Haiti instead of seeking to serve the interests of donors. Once the government has been given the time to reconstruct itself then nations should begin slowly and carefully diverting funds from NGOs to the state with continued support of the goals that the government has created.

On the community level, capacity building will be more delicate and require flexibility and patience. Private and national donors will have to reimagine what their role in Haiti is. Some academics in the field have speculated that the large number of aid organizations working in Haiti are not working to rebuild Haiti, but instead, using aid as a political tactic to manage Haiti (Buss, 2015; Schuller, 2009). If these theories are true,

then supporting community members in advocating on their own behalf may not fit the 'mission' of many agencies. For those agencies that present themselves as champions of the people they will have to learn how to release control and forge true partnerships in order to move Haitian society forward.

One of the most important roles of Haitian-led agencies has been to support communities as they lead projects. As mentioned earlier, organizations that enter communities with pre-determined projects may be doing a disservice to community members. Allowing community members to identify barriers and methods to overcoming those barriers prepares community members to bring change into their communities in a way that they may have never thought was possible. As the co-founder of the Haitian-led agency Anseye Pou Ayiti explained, "solutions already exists within the community, but they have been told over generations that they're not good enough or that they are 'poor' or that they are 'underdeveloped'." At the core of every NGO is the mission to better the current situations of all those whom they encounter. There is no better way to serve that mission than by allowing members of communities the chance to create and lead self-identified projects.

Figure 4: Anseye Pou Aytiti class at Ecole La Petite Orchidée in Mirebalais, Haiti
Source: Emerson Collective

While donors may only see projects and costs, field staff have the great opportunity to see progress and serve generations of the future. A high-ranking staff member from World Neighbors may have explained the role of NGOs best: "We do long-lasting projects and sustainable projects. That means [community members] need to use themselves to develop themselves." As the staff members of World Neighbors underscore, development projects should be more than building wells and schools.

Instead, projects should expand the vision of community members, allowing them to see past their current situation and empowering them to work towards a common goal.

CONCLUSION

The aid industry has the power to do great things throughout the world. Billions of dollars are funneled through these agencies yearly with the intention of alleviating some of the harshest conditions around the globe. Recognizing the difficulty of work that field staff attempt to do every day, I am sympathetic to the plight of both local community members and the agencies that work with them. In an effort to restore legitimacy to the work being done by foreign NGOs, I have formulated some recommendations that may assist agencies in generating more appropriate and long lasting projects throughout Haiti. As mentioned in earlier sections, without having an ongoing first-person relationship with the organizations working within Haiti my recommendations come from the current literature, interviews with NGOs working within Haiti, best practices within the United States, and stories heard from local community members while in Haiti last winter.

POWER DYNAMICS

While community engagement has seemingly become par for the course in the aid industry in Haiti, its sincerity has been questioned by many in both the local aid and academic communities. Many have called into question the authenticity of the community 'partnerships' due to the power dynamics created when one partner has

significantly more power and resources. After doing the most thorough research possible given the time limitations, it has become apparent that the ability of NGOs to work effectively in communities is hampered by the power dynamics created by NGOs in the past. As long as NGOs continue to operate as a quasi-government within Haiti their projects may never create real impact and aid in the progression of the communities they serve. When working with communities, local agencies, and local officials, foreign NGOs should strive to shift the balance of power in favor of those who reside within the communities they work, allowing community members the ability to choose their own projects without fear of being left by the aid agencies.

OWNERSHIP

Following the shift in power from those with funding to those with need, NGOs should work *alongside* communities and other local entities to instill a sense of ownership of every project. Communities should not merely be seen as beneficiaries who can be either incorporated or ignored depending on the interests of aid agencies. Communities are made up of more than just those who live there: there are also state agencies, business people, and government officials who work on behalf of the community. When reflecting on the lifespan of a relationship, whether between individual people or between entities, listening and trust-building could be thought of as step one. As we continue to discuss the methods used by different agencies we will be

able to create a community "buy-in" map of sorts; creating a best practice formula for respectful and empowering collaborations between NGOs and the communities they work in. The term ownership must push past the boundary of the project and incorporate every stakeholder who is working towards progress in Haiti.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Once having established a sense of ownership of projects, capacity building should be the main priority of NGOs, local and foreign. If projects cannot grow or even survive without funding by the NGO, the project should be considered a failure. By aiding in the capacity building of local agencies, local business people, and local government, NGOs would be securing Haiti's ability to recover from natural and man-made disasters. NGOs have given themselves the responsibility of maintaining a nation that they have no duty to, but, as mentioned earlier, the Haitian people would like this responsibility shifted back to their own government. In some sectors such as health and education, one version of capacity building is to recruit and educate local residents to carry out the mission of the NGOs. Nationally, NGOs such as the Red Cross or international agencies such as the United Nations have the opportunity to rebuild the Haitian government through mentorship of local officials. It is time for NGOs--regardless of size--working in Haiti to break with the current industry trends and refocus their

efforts on supporting the Haitian government and Haitian people in building and strengthening their capacity.

While my research focused primarily on NGOs working in Haiti, my findings and recommendations are relevant for other countries. NGOs commonly work in countries with limited government resources and in communities that usually have not been reached by the local government. To those agencies working in countries similar to Haiti, my recommendations remain essentially the same; re-examine your role in the community, re-examine the power you wield within these communities and countries, and re-examine your mission. It is imperative that NGOs continue delivering aid wherever there is a need but it is also important that NGOs and the nations that fund them allow communities and countries to maintain their identity and dignity.

My research is by no means conclusive. In the particular case of the role and impacts of NGOs in Haiti, there is much more research to be done to understand how to best use the funding and time donated by other nations. The road to a Haiti without foreign aid is long and fraught with difficulty. It would be in the best interest of Haiti for more researchers to examine the current methods of NGOs and the local government in an effort to create proper capacity building methods and policies, reconstruct the economy to support itself once NGO funding is no longer forthcoming to buttress the national budget, and take the necessary steps to enable to Haitian government to offer high–quality human services throughout the nation. Haiti has had a rough journey since

its inception, but throughout all of the hardship the people of Haiti have always managed to retain the same fighting spirit that their ancestors had in 1804. This is the same spirit that will help them move the nation forward.

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